

R. C. Jain

Vs

High Court of Patna and Others

Civil Appeal No. 10905 of 1996

(B. P. Jeevan Reddy, K. S. Paripoornan JJ)

23.08.1996

JUDGMENT

PARIPOORNAN, J.

1. Special leave granted.

2. The appellant is a District and Sessions Judge, Patna with effect from 22-9-1988. Along with others, his name was also considered for extension of service beyond 58 years of age. The Evaluation Committee of the High Court of Patna held a meeting on 29-6-1995. Thereafter, the matter was considered by the Full Court (High Court of Patna) on 22-7-1995. The Full Court decided not to give extension to the appellant beyond the age of 58 years. Aggrieved by the same, the appellant filed CWJC No. 7401 of 1995 in the High Court. By judgment dated 14-2-1996, a learned Single Judge disposed of the writ petition with the observation that the appellant may make a representation before the Hon'ble Chief Justice of the High Court with a prayer to place his case before the Full Court for reconsideration. As per orders of the learned Chief Justice on the administrative side dated 1-3-1996, the Registrar General, High Court of Patna, filed Letters Patent Appeal (LPA) No. 298 of 1996 against the decision of the learned Single Judge dated 14-2-1996. As per the orders of the Chief Justice dated 15-3-1996, the matter was posted before the Division Bench presided over by Mr Justice N. Pandey. Objection seems to have been taken that the LPA was not maintainable. The Division Bench consisting of Mr Justice N. Pandey and Mr Justice I.P. Singh passed an order dated 27-3-1996 stating that the maintainability of the appeal shall be considered at the time of admission. From 1-4-1996 there was a change in the constitution of the Division Benches. On 4-4-1996, the Chief Justice ordered that the matter may be placed before the Bench dealing with the LPA matters. At that time, Mr Justice S.N. Jha was presiding over the Division Bench dealing with the LPA matters. On 5-4-1996, the Division Bench presided over by Mr Justice S.N. Jha admitted the LPA and stayed the operation of the decision of the learned Single Judge dated 14-2-1996. The hearing was fixed to take place on 3-7-1996. In the meanwhile, the appellant filed the special leave petition (SLP) before this Court on 1-5-1996, assailing the decision of the Division Bench dated 5-4-1996, admitting LPA No. 298 of 1996 to file.

3. In the SLP filed in this Court, the appellant alleged that the LPA was filed without the permission of the Chief Justice of the High Court of Patna, that the then Registrar General and certain other officers of the Registry of the High Court were inimically disposed towards him, and it is based on the misrepresentation contained in the notes of the Registrar (Inspection) dated 4-4-1996, an erroneous impression was given to the Chief Justice that the appellant filed the LPA against the decision of the learned Single Judge, certain directions were given by the learned Chief Justice which has resulted in manifest injustice to him. In view of the above averments, a Bench of this

Court, by order dated 9-7-1996 issued notice to the Registrar General, High Court of Patna, and directed that the entire papers may be placed before this Court for perusal at the next date of hearing. Accordingly, the matter came up before this Court on 12-8-1996.

4. We heard counsel. At the time of hearing of the appeal, it is common ground that the judgment passed by the learned Single Judge dated 14-2-1996 in CWJC No. 7401 of 1995 was set aside by a Division Bench and the writ petition filed by the appellant stood dismissed. The judgment of the Division Bench is dated 7-8-1996.

5. The Registrar General of the Patna High Court has filed a detailed counter-affidavit dated 9-8-1996 enclosing a copy of the judgment passed by the Division Bench dated 7-8-1996. In particular, it was urged that the SLP has become infructuous in view of the subsequent events. In our view, the submission is justified in law. All that was attacked in the SLP was the order of the Division Bench dated 5-4-1996 admitting the LPA. The final order passed by the Division Bench dated 7-8-1996 is not challenged. The appeal was admitted, the matter was heard and final decision has also been rendered. In such circumstances, we are of the view that the proceeding initiated as per SLP No. 11276 of 1996 has become infructuous. On this short ground this appeal should be dismissed. We hereby do so.

6. Before closing, one aspect very vehemently contended in the SLP, which had resulted in the issue of notice to the Registrar General of the High Court and to call for the files, deserves to be considered. The complaint was that the LPA was filed in the High Court without obtaining the directions of the learned Chief Justice. The further complaint was that an erroneous impression was given to the learned Chief Justice that the appellant had filed the LPA against the decision of the learned Single Judge and that erroneous impression has resulted in the learned Chief Justice giving certain directions in the matter. Certain vague and wild allegations have been made against the then Registrar General and other officers of the Registry to the effect that the said officers misled the learned Chief Justice to further their selfish ends and to harm the appellant.

7. The Registrar General in the counter-affidavit dated 9-8-1996 has denied the above allegations. The context in which a wrong noting was made by the Registrar (Inspection) dated 4-4-1996 has also been explained. The entire files were placed before us. We perused the entire files. It is seen that the learned Chief Justice, High Court of Patna by order dated 1-3-1996 directed to take steps to file an LPA against the judgment of the learned Single Judge rendered in CWJC No. 7401 of 1995. It was thereafter that the LPA was filed. The draft of the LPA was also perused by the learned Chief Justice. Thereafter, Shri Mudrika Prasad, Registrar (Inspection) sought necessary orders for posting of the appeal. By order dated 15-3-1996, the learned Chief Justice directed the posting of the appeal before the Division Bench presided over by Justice Shri Pandey. When the matter came up before the said Bench on 27-3-1996, it was held that the objection regarding the maintainability of the LPA shall be considered at the time of admission. From 1-4-1996 there was a change in the constitution of the different benches. The Division Bench presided over by Mr Justice S.N. Jha was dealing with the LPA matters. The Registrar (Inspection) by office note dated 4-4-1996 sought instructions from the learned Chief Justice regarding the posting of the appeal. In that note, it has been inadvertently stated that LPA No. 298 of 1996 was filed before the High Court of Patna by the appellant. The learned Chief Justice by his order dated 4-4-1996 directed the posting of the appeal before the Bench presided over by the Mr Justice S.N. Jha. Subsequently, the said Bench heard the matter and rendered its decision on 7-8-1996 whereby the judgment of the learned Single Judge was set aside.

8. A perusal of the files makes two aspects clear. (i) As early as 1-3-1996 the learned Chief Justice

has directed the Registry to file an LPA through the Registrar against the judgment of the learned Single Judge rendered in CWJC No. 7401 of 1995, and (ii) it was thereafter on 4-4-1996, the Registrar (Inspection), by office note dated 4-4-1996 sought direction of the learned Chief Justice regarding the posting of the case. The Chief Justice was aware at that time that LPA No. 298 of 1996 was filed against the judgment of the learned Single Judge as per his orders and that earlier he had directed the posting of the case before the Division Bench presided over by Mr Justice Pandey, and further direction was sought since the constitution of the benches had changed with effect from 1-4-1996. It was in such circumstances, the learned Chief Justice by order dated 4-4-1996 ordered the posting of the matter before the Division Bench which was dealing with the LPA matters. The said Bench was presided over by Mr Justice S.N. Jha.

9. The above two aspects make it abundantly clear that it was the learned Chief Justice, Patna High Court who had himself directed the filing of the LPA and the later inadvertent and mistaken noting of the Registrar (Inspection) dated 4-4-1996 had nothing to do with the direction of the Chief Justice dated 4-4-1996 posting the case before the Bench presided over by Mr Justice S.N. Jha. In view of the above, we have no hesitation to hold that the appeal was filed only after obtaining the directions of the learned Chief Justice, that the noting made by the Registrar (Inspection) dated 4-4-1996 had only sought for a direction regarding the subsequent posting of the appeal and the noting had nothing to do regarding the directions to be given for the posting of the case before any bench.

10. Considered in the light of the above facts, we are satisfied that the various allegations made in the SLP regarding the then Registrar General and also the officers of the Registry of the Patna High Court, are absolutely unwarranted and unjustified. We hold that the filing of the appeal, the hearing of the same from time to time by the different Division Benches of the High Court and the disposal thereof had been done in the normal and routine way and they are not open to any attack as stated in the SLP.

11. Along with the SLP, the appellant has filed a copy of the office note submitted by the Registrar (Inspection) dated 4-4-1996 before the learned Chief Justice for consideration of the Chief Justice. In the affidavit of urgency (available at pp. 52 to 55) filed by Shri Rajendra Kumar Jain, son of the appellant, the said office note (available at pp. 54 and 55 of the paper-book), has been reproduced. We questioned counsel for the appellant as to how the appellant was able to produce a copy of the office note dated 4-4-1996. The appellant having produced the said document, a duty is cast on him to explain the source from which he obtained the said copy and in what circumstances he could obtain the same. This is all the more so, since reference has been made in the affidavit of urgency dated 14-6-1996 to the said document. Counsel for the appellant declined to disclose the source from where he obtained a copy of the said document. On the other hand, he vehemently stated that this Court should call upon the Registrar of the Patna High Court to explain and it is no part of his duty to explain as to how he obtained a copy of the document. To say the least, we are surprised at the attitude of the appellant's counsel in totally refusing to disclose the source from which the appellant obtained a copy of the document. In our opinion, the appellant and his counsel owe a duty to this Court to disclose the source or circumstances under which the said document dated 4-4-1996 was obtained. We express our strong displeasure at the attitude of the appellant and his counsel in totally refusing to disclose to the Court the manner in which a document filed in court was obtained. For the present, we do not want to say anything further in this matter, but we want to make it clear that the attitude adopted is totally reprehensible and cannot be countenanced by a court of law.

12. We dismiss the appeal. There shall be no order as to costs.